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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the distinctions made between teacher training (preservice) and development (inservice) focuses on these issues in the context of supervision of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). Knowledge from the larger field of education is applied to the interactions of teacher and supervisor. The supervisor's role is seen from the following perspectives: as a prescriptive function; as an observer and change agent of discrete teaching behaviors; and as a catalyst for teacher understanding of the total context and processes of classroom teaching and learning. The ways in which users of each approach define and work toward instructional improvement are considered, and the benefits and problems of each approach are examined. It is concluded that the most useful approach to teacher supervision combines both training and development, providing both the means for teachers to become more aware of what it is to be a teacher and skills for making more informed teaching decisions. A 24-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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TEACHER SUPERVISION: PRESCRIPTION, TRAINING, AND DEVELOPMENT

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Guest lecture given to teacher educators at Janus Pannonius University, Pécs, Hungary

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Introduction

Second language teacher educators have focused on redefining teacher education in terms of training and development (Fanselow, 1987, 1988; Freeman, 1982, 1989, 1990; Richards, 1987, 1990; Richards and Nunan, 1990). Rather than accepting prescriptions as to how teaching "should" be done, emphasis is placed on understanding discrete teaching behaviors and their consequences (training) and on processes through which teachers can construct and reconstruct their own teaching based on a holistic understanding of contexts of teaching (development).

However, with the exception of Freeman (1982, 1990) and Gebhard (1990a), there has been only indirect attempts to clarify what this distinction means within a one-to-one relationship between the supervisor and teacher. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the literature which directly addresses ESL teacher supervision. The aim is to apply knowledge from the larger field of teacher education, specifically on concepts of prescription, training, and development, to what the supervisor and teacher do together.

The talk begins with a discussion of supervision as prescription, after which supervision as training and supervision as development are examined. Discussion of each approach

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includes how the goal of supervision, that of improved instruction, is understood and the processes through which the supervisor and teacher work toward reaching this goal. Discussion also includes an evaluation of the possible benefits and problems with each approach.

Teacher supervision as prescription

The goal of supervision as prescription

When the approach is prescriptive, the supervisor tells the teacher how to teach with the intention of providing the best possible means to improve instruction so that student learning will take place (Gebhard, 1984). The teaching behaviors the supervisor prescribes are usually based on the supervisor's experience as a teacher, sometimes on methodological guidelines, and sometimes on conjectural knowledge about teaching and learning derived from theory of second language acquisition, theory of learning or research on effective schooling.

The Process: Improved instruction through prescription

When the approach to supervision is prescriptive, the supervisor observes to evaluate the teacher's classroom performance, sometimes using an evaluation form which lists the criteria for good teaching. The supervisor makes judgments about how effective the teacher's teaching is, after which the supervisor meets with the teacher to point out strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's instruction and to offer better ways to teach. The aim is for the teacher to change his or her

teaching behavior to meet the expectations of the supervisor or the supervisor's prescribed method.

Benefits and problems with supervision as prescription

One of the benefits of prescriptive supervision is convenience. In some ESL settings, supervisors are assigned large numbers of teachers to observe. In such supervisory contexts, prescription makes the supervisory process easier. The supervisor simply has to see if the teacher is complying with the criteria for good teaching and point out what the teacher needs to change in his or her teaching. In addition, some teachers, especially those new to teaching, think of the supervisor as an authority, and accordingly, look to the supervisor to provide security and give advice (Copeland 1982).

However, there are problems with prescriptive supervision. To begin with, it can be threatening to some teachers. To some teachers, the prescriptive supervisor creates so much anxiety that the teacher becomes distressed over the very thought of the supervisor coming to observe the class (Gebhard, 1984). Furthermore, prescriptions are not necessarily justified. When a supervisor tells a teacher to always speak louder, to always write instructions on the board, or always to teach the grammatical rule before having students practice the language, then there is no basis for the prescription. In short, although there are behaviors which are thought to be more conducive to learning, such as adjusting rate of speech to proficiency levels and the use of repetition of target language

forms (Chaudron, 1988), it is very difficult to identify specific teaching behaviors which are unambiguously linked to learning (Bailey 1985; Chaudron, 1988; Gaies 1983).

Finally, if supervisory prescription is based on having the teacher conform to a particular method, the supervisor is going against the dynamic nature of teaching itself. As Richards (1990a) points out:

> Studies of classroom events have demonstrated that teaching is not static or fixed in time but is a dynamic, interactional process in which the teacher's "method" results from the processes of interaction between the teacher, the learners, and the instructional tasks and activities over time (p. 37).

By telling teachers to conform to a method, the supervisor is blocking them from creating and recreating their own "method" based on exploration of teaching behaviors and their consequences and on knowledge of the learners over time (Fanselow, 1990). For example, if a supervisor tells a teacher to always write instructions on the blackboard, this could bridle the teacher's explorative instincts to give instructions in a variety of ways, such as putting them on an overhead projector, giving them as a dictation, having students paraphrase them back to the teacher, or role playing them (Gebhard and Malicka 1991).

Teacher Supervision as Training

The goal of supervision as training

Unlike the prescriptive approach, supervisors who use training recognize that good teaching is difficult to define. Thus, rather than basing the idea of improvement on meeting

prescribed ways of teaching, improvement is based on what teachers are expected to be doing in a specific teaching context as compared to what they actually do. As Gaies and Bowers (1990), who borrowed the idea from Acheson and Gall (1980), put it, "the supervisory process has as its goal helping teachers reduce the discrepancy between actual teaching behavior and ideal teaching behavior" (p. 169). For example, if a teacher's actual behavior is to have students read out loud while stopping them to correct their pronunciation, improvement would be if the teacher has students stop to paraphrase the meaning of the text or to read silently while doing tasks.

The process: Improved instruction through training

The training process was developed by teacher educators outside second language teacher supervision (Acheson and Gall, 1980; Cogan 1973; Goldhammer, et al., 1980) and adapted to supervision in ESL/EFL settings (Abbott and Carter 1985; Gaies and Bowers 1990). The process begins with a pre-observation conference at which the teacher and supervisor isolate discrete behaviors which can be practiced and mastered (Freeman 1989). Such behaviors include use of classroom space, wait time, questions, praise behaviors, time on task, and teacher talk.

The supervisor then observes the interaction in the teacher's classroom by focusing on the predetermined teaching behavior through the use of a variety of observation techniques (See Day, 1990). For example, if the focus is on reducing

"teacher talk", the supervisor might use a stop watch to record the percentage of teacher and students talk. Some supervisors tally behaviors, such as the number of times the teacher and students ask questions or the number of times the teacher praises a student. Some use sketches, for example, to show how the teacher and students use classroom space.

After the observation, the supervisor and teacher discuss the class, using the supervisor's observations as the center of discussion. This process then cycles back again to decisions about which discrete teaching behaviors to work on next.

Benefits and problems with supervision as training

An initial benefit is that the focus is on building the teacher's awareness about what teachers do in classrooms, rather than on what they should do. The supervisor can still provide ideas about how teaching can be accomplished but does not have to make claims that learning will result. Another benefit is that the teacher is usually an active participant. For example, Abbott and Carter (1985) recommend teachers and supervisors negotiate a contract which includes the discrete behavior to give attention.

However, there are problems with training. As Freeman (1989, 1990), Gaies and Bowers (1990) and Richards (1987, 1990a) point out, some aspects of teaching can not be mastered through training. For example, effective classroom management can not be taught and practiced as a discrete component because it includes the complex ways in which student behavior, space, and task are

organized and controlled by the teacher to accomplish teaching (Richards, 1990b). Other such aspects of teaching include motivating learners, structuring tasks, rewarding students for excellent work, pacing lessons, or grouping learners.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of training is that teachers are not directly taught a decision making process. As Fanselow (1987, 1990) and Gebhard (1990b) point out, the usual approaches to teacher supervision put emphasis on the results of teachers' teaching rather than on a process of exploration through which teachers can know how to see patterns in their teaching and consequences of their behavior on classroom interaction.

Teacher Supervision as Development

The goal of supervision as development

The goal of development is for teachers to examine "the total context of classroom teaching and learning in an attempt to understand how the interactions between and among teacher, learners, and classroom tasks affect learning" (Richards, 1990b:9). The goal of improved instruction is potentially realized because through the processes of teacher development, teachers gain a better understanding of the total context of teaching and learning. In addition, since the aim of the supervisory process is not only to motivate teachers to take on the responsibility for their own teaching, but also to teach them the procedures they can use to gain awareness of their teaching and to make their own more informed teaching decisions, improved

instruction is thought to be on-going rather than something that happens when the supervisor is around.

The process: Improved instruction through development

Supervisors who approach supervision as a process of teacher development show teachers how they can gain awareness of the learners, themselves as teachers, and the way they teach, as well as teach them self-observation processes through which they can make their own informed teaching decisions.

Richards (1990b; chapter seven) and Richards and Nunan (1990) in their edited book present a variety of processes which aim at teacher development, and some of these processes are relevant to teacher supervision. Bailey (1990), for example, shows how teachers can gain awareness through diary studies which she defines as "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events" (p. 215). She recommends diarists keep on-going records of events, details, and feelings about their past language learning and present teaching experience in the diary and that teachers must "feel free to reflect, experiment, criticize, doubt, express frustration, and raise questions in the journal. Otherwise its main benefits - personal development and insights about teaching - will be negated" (p. 218).

In order to maintain confidentiality, Bailey suggests that the teacher as diarist should be given the chance to revise the

journal entries for the public. This also helps clarify meaning in the process. In addition, she points out the importance for the diarist to study the journal entries, looking for patterns and significant events, as well have the chance to interpret and discuss the revised version.

Richards (1990a) discusses self-reporting as a way for teachers to develop awareness of teaching. Self-reporting involves "completing an inventory or checklist in which the teacher indicates which teaching practices were used within a lesson or within a specified time period and how often they were used" (Richards, 1990a:123). One such checklists has been designed by Christison and Bassano (1984) and provides categories for teachers to consider aspects of the learning environment, classroom, presentation of ideas, students' self-concepts, aptitude, and development, and the aspects of interaction and use of language.

Fanselow (1987, 1990) approaches teacher development as a process of exploration. He teaches teachers how to construct their own knowledge about teaching and generate their own alternative teaching behaviors through a process of exploring classroom behaviors and their consequences. This process (also described, adapted and illustrated by Gebhard, 1990b, and Gebhard and Ueda, in press) includes collecting samples of teaching (through sketches, notes, jotting down example dialogue, audio or video recording transcripts), sometimes coding samples of classroom interaction with an observation system (Allen et al.,

1983; Fanselow, 1987; Ullman and Geva, 1984), analyzing the interaction for patterns, interpreting what these patterns mean (for example, in relation to learning), and making decisions about what to do next which would possibly break the pattern.

Benefits and problems with supervision as development

To begin with, teacher development activities "enable teachers to move from a level where they may be guided largely by impulse, intuition, or routine to a level where their actions are guided by reflection and critical thinking" (Richards, 1990b: 119). Likewise, such activities can possibly narrow the gap between what teachers imagine they do in the classroom (their ideal behavior) and what they actually do (their real behavior) (Fanselow, 1990; Richards, 1990b).

Perhaps most importantly, when teacher educators approach supervision as teacher development, they give more responsibility for decision making about what goes on in the classroom to the teacher, and as such, at least in my experience, some teachers gain a sense of freedom and self-security (Gebhard and Ueda, in press). As such, they continue to develop on their own, and they have the means through which to do this.

However, one problem with approaching supervision as teacher development is that not all teachers are willing or perceive themselves able to take on the responsibility for their own teaching. This seems to be especially true if the teacher is a product of a highly centralized educational system which

emphasizes a set curriculum and methods of teaching.

Conclusion

Today I have explained three approaches to teacher supervision, including how those who use each approach define and work toward the goal of improved instruction, as well as possible benefits and problems with each approach. It is thought that there is little value in a prescriptive approach. A training approach focuses attention on closing the gap between ideal and real teaching behaviors, and it can be useful for new teachers. However, training is limited in that it focuses teachers' attention on discrete aspects of teaching which can block teachers from seeing teaching as a holistic teaching-learning process.

Perhaps the most reasonable approach to improve instruction, as Gaies and Bowers (1990) and Freeman (1989) indicate, is one which focuses on both training and development. Training is useful to orientate teachers to descrite teaching behaviors, while approaching teaching as a developmental process provide teachers with opportunities to explore classroom processes and to construct and reconstruct their teaching through the use of personal dairy studies, self-monitoring guides, and systematic observation, analysis, and interpretation of teaching. In this way, supervisors can provide the means for teachers to become more aware of what it means to be a teacher, as well has how to make more informed teaching decisions.

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